

Editor's Note

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The articles in the present issue address five main areas of relevance to contemporary African societies, namely, development, education, gender equality, the need for critical evaluation of indigenous African cultures, and reflections on moral values.

Two articles examine the issue of development. With the eye of an ethicist, Kibaba Makokha focuses on the need to harmonize efforts at environmental conservation with endeavours to foster sustainable human development. He urges that the imperative to attain sustainable development requires all moral agents to rise to their individual and collective responsibility to secure the well-being of humans as well as that of the natural environment. On his part, Oyekan Adeolu Oluwaseyi revisits H. Odera Oruka's philosophy of foreign aid, and contends that a purely ethical approach to this issue, as adopted by Oruka, is bound to fail alongside many other strategies that have borne no substantial fruit. According to him, for the sake of stability and progress in the continent, it is necessary to develop programmes for the effective assistance of the poor on altruistic and prudential grounds.

Oswell Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru explores the implications of Odera Oruka's four trends in African Philosophy for education in the continent. He proposes an eclectic approach in which all trends in African philosophy (the four originally identified by Oruka alongside several others) have a role to play in responding to the challenge of constructing an authentic African philosophy of education.

Jonathan Okeke Chimakonam and Sunny Nzie Agu jointly address the issue of gender equality, with specific reference to the Igbo women of Eastern Nigeria. On the basis of a research they carried out using the random sampling method, they conclude that consciousness of their own gender has deprived Igbo women of free expression of their rights and abilities, sometimes as much as constraining societal norms and conditions have done. Consequently, they recommend a conscious adjustment of what they refer to as “the epistemology of womanhood” or “female cognition” among Igbo women.

Most African and Africanist social theorists would agree that there is need for critical evaluation of indigenous African cultures with a view to advocating the rejection of any features in them that are against human welfare, or that are based on logically inconsistent beliefs. In this regard, Oyelakin Richard Taye argues for two main points that touch on the beliefs of the Yoruba of Nigeria. *First*, in spite of the Yoruba belief that no human being is privy to the content of destiny, the Yoruba belief in sudden or sorrowful death presupposes some knowledge of the content of each person’s destiny. *Second*, the belief in destiny on the one hand, and in sudden or sorrowful death on the other, are mutually exclusive. He contends that because such contradictions are common in the full range of Yoruba beliefs, there is need for a critical examination of the Yoruba belief system in the endeavour to fashion a modern culture.

Two papers examine indigenous ethical thought. Babalola Joseph Balogun argues that from whichever perspective it is viewed - religious, humanistic or rationalist - the Yoruba moral system has strictly consequentialist foundations, and is hence subsumable under the general consequentialist ethical programme. However, he contends that Yoruba consequentialism diverges significantly from its western counterpart on the claim that “the end justifies the means”; for whereas this is true of western consequentialism, according to Yoruba consequentialism no evil, however well-intended, can bring about a good end. Fainos Mangena and Ezra Chitando jointly reflect on the concept of Euthanasia as understood in the West and in Africa, with specific reference to the Shona of Zimbabwe. They endeavour to ascertain whether or not there is something that can be called African euthanasia, and if not, whether or not the understanding of euthanasia in Africa has Western roots.

In view of the ten issues of the New Series of *Thought and Practice* published from June 2009 to date, we in the Editorial Board are confident that the journal is on track to realising its vision - “a forum for incisive philosophic reflection on intellectual, social and political issues within the African context“. This it is doing by executing its clear mandate stipulated in its Mission as “a bi-annual, peer-reviewed, open access, online journal which serves scholars with broad interests in the humanities and social sciences by disseminating original articles with a philosophical outlook, with emphasis on intellectual, social and political issues that are of special relevance to contemporary Africa.“

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Editor-in-Chief